

Zapatismo Versus the Neoliberal University: Towards a Pedagogy Against Oblivion

*Power was trying to teach us individualism and profit.
We were not good students.*

“Ana Maria”
Zapatista Education Promoter

Neoliberalism is a force to be reckoned with. More readily, it is both a process and a discourse that picks up where the colonial ideals of classical liberalism left off in order to persuade members of civil society to believe that individualism, competition, and self-capitalization are the natural conditions of life. Through the use of a panic-inducing threat of “not being successful” in life, the discursive practices that constitute neoliberalism suggest human existence is rooted in the capitalist desires of gaining competitive advantages, accumulating possessions, laying claim to “knowledge,” and wielding power. Neoliberal logic also amplifies capitalist social relations by making the assertion that people meant to flourish in life will only do so by demonstrating market ambition, financial self-reliance, and an entrepreneurial spirit. As members of civil society consent to (or are reluctantly forced to submit to) these ideals, socio-environmental interactions iteratively become more fragmented and profit-centric, oftentimes in the most ordinary of ways. Consequently, people are persuaded to accept, through a neoliberal regime-of-truth, that the world is nothing more than a market in which everything, and everyone, can be bought and sold. Essentially, the discourse of neoliberalism has changed the rules of the game, so to speak, so that in order to survive we must play on capitalism’s terms.

With this perspective as a starting point, this chapter unfolds by addressing two interrelated areas of geographical, anarchist, and pedagogical interest: 1) Neoliberalism in universities and 2) Zapatismo. First, I provide an analysis of neoliberalism and touch upon what neoliberal discourse is producing within mainstream higher education. Second, based upon my time living in the rural highlands and Lacandon Jungle of Chiapas (Mexico), I offer an overview of Zapatismo and how the Zapatistas are practicing autonomous education in the face of

neoliberalism.* To elaborate, the first half of the piece highlights how contemporary (Anglo-American) universities are imposing extreme individualism and market-oriented subjectivities upon the students, teachers, and workers who enter them. And in the second half, I provide a brief genealogy of the Zapatista Insurgency, discuss the principles and possibilities of Zapatismo, and share a few stories of how the Zapatistas approach education through their commitment to autonomy, collective work, and mutual aid. More precisely then, this is a chapter about anguish and hope.

Throughout the sections that follow, I will draw from my experiences with the Zapatistas (predominantly Indigenous Maya), and Zapatismo, during over half a year of living and learning in-and-amongst their rebel territories. Thus, much of what I reflect upon throughout the piece emerges from listening to Zapatistas, not “researching” them.¹ To be more specific, over the duration of my time in Chiapas I lived and studied in the *caracol* of Oventic,² attended workshops with human rights observers on Indigenous people’s right to self-determination, wrote news reports about ongoing paramilitary violence occurring within the region for international/independent media outlets, was part of a memorial caravan that traveled to *La Realidad* (another Zapatista *caracol*) to pay homage to an Indigenous teacher named Galeano,³ witnessed the figurative entombment of Subcomandante Marcos,⁴ painted a mural on the wall of a Zapatista school,⁵ and contracted typhoid (this happened outside of Zapatista territory).⁷ Amidst all the learning I was doing, I suspect I was probably in the way more often than not. But the Zapatistas are both organized and patient, and part of their rebellion is built upon welcoming “*internacionales*” (Zapatista sympathizers, organizers, supporters, “Adherents to the Sixth,”⁸ etc. from all over the world), so my time within their territories was nothing less than a convivial whirlwind of transformative lessons in radical political philosophy, decolonial praxis, gender justice, anti-capitalist resistance, popular education, and more succinctly – dignity.

It is significant to note that over the course of my time in the *caracol* of Oventic, as well as my experiences with Human Rights Observers in Chiapas, the vast majority of the *internacionales* I encountered were women. It was also not uncommon to meet people who

* I am forever grateful and indebted to:

1) The Mexico Solidarity Network: for the opportunity to encounter the Zapatistas.

2) Elise Hjalmarson: for her insightful, perceptive, and sharp thoughts, and vision.

3) The Zapatistas: For hope, and for being so welcoming, hospitable, caring, but mostly, for not kicking me out!

identified as queer. Further to this point, nearly all of the people I met throughout my stay at the *caracol* identified as feminist (occasionally pro-feminist), many employing a wide variety of differing respective adjectives preceding “feminist” (e.g. Anarcha-, Transnational-, Indigenous-, Marxist-, Anti-racist- Socialist-, Queer-, Radical-, “Pissed-off-,” etc.). While subtle and perhaps not necessarily generalizable based on my six-month stint in the rebel territories alone, I do find this dynamic quite telling in regard to just how inclusive, and revolutionary, the gender politics of Zapatistas have become. Ever since my return, and even as I continue to go back, I cannot help but think that our university systems would do well to learn a thing or two from the Zapatistas.⁹

Common Ground: Anarchism and Zapatismo

That's why we admire anarchist thought. It's clear that we are not anarchists, but their approaches are the kind that provoke and nourish; the kind that make you think. And believe me that orthodox critical thought, for lack of a better phrase, has a lot to learn from anarchist thought.

“Subcomandante Galeano” (formerly “Marcos”)¹⁰

The most widely seen motto in the Zapatista rebel territories, as well as perhaps the single phrase that encapsulates Zapatismo most accurately, reads: “*Para Todos Todo, Para Nosotros Nada*” (“Everything for Everyone, Nothing for Us”). In the face of global capitalism, such a statement is as humble as it is rebellious. It explicitly foregrounds mutual aid, cooperation, and selflessness, which mirrors several currents of thought expressed by many anarchists (DeJacques 2012 [1859]; Flores Magón 1910; Goldman, E. 2012; Kropotkin 1992 [1885]; Sánchez Saornil 1935). In stating this, I should note the Zapatistas are not anarchists. But in fairness, it does not seem to be because they have anything against anarchists (as reflected in Subcomandante Galeano’s quote above, as well as in numerous communiqués in which they playfully praise anarchists). Rather, it is because the Zapatistas consider all categorical options offered by modernity to be “traps.” In practice though, many aspects of their rebellion do indeed appear to be quite Anarchist, (one of their autonomous municipalities is even named after the renowned Mexican Anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón), just as many of their actions seem to be Marxist, Communist, Feminist, Queer, Poststructuralist, Environmentalist, Socialist, Postmodernist, Liberation Theology’ist and so forth. However, they reject carrying the label of any

philosophical classification, theoretical lens, or “ist,” because their over 500 year struggle predates all such terms, and because of the ideological walls that often emerge around them.

The Zapatista’s refusal to pin themselves with the badge of one political philosophy stems from their recognition that aligning oneself along ideological lines often means tacitly following prescribed dogmas, leaders, “fathers,” or canons. They are also aware of the potential fractures, divisions, and discord that may occur amongst groups who should otherwise be working together. Hence, in their efforts to construct “*Un Mundo Donde Quepan Muchos Mundos*” (“A World Where Many Worlds Fit”), the Zapatistas decline to brand themselves in any specific ideological fashion, even though they have lightheartedly admitted to having the tendencies of some along the way. In saying this, the Zapatistas are not without firm conviction of thought, principle, and perspective, which they have outlined in their word and practice (EZLN-CCRI 2005). Thus, when it comes to the Zapatismo and Anarchism, despite the fact they are not one in the same, it is clear that the Zapatistas do have common ground with, as well as respect for anarchists, particularly in the struggle against neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism as Oblivion

In the current moment, neoliberalism is status quo. This has been brought about by over 40 years of existing capitalist economic systems becoming increasingly liberalized through policies of privatization, deregulation, and financialization (Barnett 2005; Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010; Marcos 2001). Social relations and private life are also undergoing processes of neoliberalization, so that while neoliberal economic programs have been intensifying, so too have spurious narratives promoting the perceived benefits to be gained if an unregulated global economy is seen through to its fruition (Peck 2010; Larner 2003; Springer 2012b). One fundamental tenet espoused by neoliberal rhetoric argues that capitalism is natural and normal because it is unbiased and objective; dynamics which will purportedly allow free markets to impartially decide who will succeed and who will fail (Marcos 2001; Brown 2003; McCarthy and Prudham 2004). Neoliberal reason also suggests that structural problems are neither systemic, nor interconnected, but that the pervasive anguish being felt across the globe resulting from structural oppression is nothing more than the aggregate sum of discrete personal flaws and individual failings. To pour salt into the wound, the apparatuses disseminating neoliberal ideals claim government spending on social services, civic welfare, and the common good are

excessive, unaffordable, and unreasonable (Brenner and Theodore 2002; England and Ward 2007; Springer 2008). Wasteful public expenditures and inherent personal shortcomings are then used to rationalize social violence/inequality, which often coincide with arguments that frame policies of economic redistribution as “handouts enabling freeloaders to take advantage of the system.”

In turn, solutions to the widespread social ills that market-focused state bureaucracies have given rise to are conceived, condescendingly, as issues best remedied by “dumb” or “lazy” people “pulling themselves up by their bootstraps.” Neoliberal discourse thus does the work of defending neoliberal policies by offering duplicitous commentaries on, and ineffective remedies to, the socially destructive problems it has generated. The absurdity of this logic is aptly summed up by a popular satirical poster in which a government building is pictured with the caption: “If you think the problems we create are bad, just wait until you see our solutions.” This goes to show that analyzing neoliberalism would almost prove to be comedic, if it were not so tragic/violent. Even given such paradoxes, the rhetoric of neoliberalism is able to garner support for free enterprise by blaming the poor and marginalized for their suffering, while claiming its auto-correcting edicts of entrepreneurialism and self-capitalization will benefit everyone if only embraced by the “uneducated” and “unmotivated” (Heynen and Robbins 2005; Sparke 2006). Open markets, free trade, and foreign direct investment, it is suggested, will grow profits for businesses all across the globe, which subsequently will allow revenue to trickle down upon the masses in the form of job opportunities and wages (England and Ward 2007; McCarthy and Prudham 2004; Springer 2010; Willis, Smith, and Stenning 2008).

Despite the inherent contradictions permeating neoliberal discourse, its message nevertheless is highly influential, albeit hollow. But once the logics and processes of neoliberalism become normative, members of society are then compelled, often with no other options, to monetize their passions and creativity in order to fit into highly-specified yet restrictive arrangements of capitalist social relations. Individuals are thereby forced to self-surveil and regulate their thoughts and behaviors so as to reify themselves as skillsets and commodities to be bought, sold, and circulated within a market. These nearly inescapable circumstances are often the only (unfair) choices people have in simply making it through everyday life. And a situation in which it is compulsory for people to discipline themselves, as

well as punish others, into becoming hyper-competitive for the purposes of individual gain and reproducing capitalism is (as a Zapatista teacher said to me) – “*olvido*” (oblivion).

Neoliberalism and the Fragmentation of Everyday Life

Neoliberalism has become a part of everyday life. It is enmeshed in constructions of knowledge, currents of power, as well as assertions of “truth.” And the ways in which power, knowledge, and “truth” (as well as neoliberalism) function are complex, transitory, and ephemeral. This is because power, knowledge, and “truth” are neither exercised in strictly top-down fashions, nor are they solely generated from below (Foucault 2010). Rather, they flow through, and mutually constitute, discourses. Like power, discourses emanate diffusely whilst being context-dependent, and emerge “from both everywhere and nowhere,” at the same time as being situated, variegating, and kinetic (Springer 2012b, 136). Given the relational and fluctuating processes that comprise neoliberalism, it is thereby helpful to analyze it as a discourse (Springer 2012b). In stating this, it is also essential to recognize that despite the abstruse, concealed, and shadowy nature of how neoliberal discourse operates, what it yields undeniably penetrates lives, often viscerally so. It is therefore crucial to emphasize that the discursive practices of neoliberalism are also material in process and product, as well as emplaced in day-to-day life and written upon bodies.

The prosaic manners in which the disciplinary mechanisms (e.g. fragmentation, entrepreneurialism, responsabilization) of neoliberalism function often result in societal disengagement, indifference, and widespread neglect with regard to the needs of others. The rules of (neoliberal) conduct are thereby (re)asserted and (re)affirmed in the most commonplace situations, and serve to subtly impel members of society to atomize their patterns of thought, and compartmentalize social interactions (Gough 2004; Sparke 2012; Springer 2010; Willis, Smith, and Stenning 2008). The banality of neoliberal discourse is thus what allows its recursive practices to eviscerate society so imperceptibly. In time, the ideals of neoliberalism establish an existence that teaches civil society that repression, injustice, and domination are the inevitable consequences of an imperfect, innately hierarchical, world. People then learn that conditions would be much worse if it were not for the ability of capitalism to reward individuals who are smart/strong/competitive enough to rise to the top.

The products generated by neoliberal logic run deep, and the adversity it creates is ad hoc, arbitrary, and haphazard. Abject poverty, dismal living conditions, ongoing colonial violence, institutionalized racism, heteropatriarchal oppression, the ostracism of queer and gender variant people, the invisibilization of disabled people, the exclusion of migrants/“foreigners,” and the whole lot of society’s grim ills are parceled out and blamed on individuals or “othered” groups. Their alleged culpability is then justified through interpellations of essentialist stereotypes and reductionist classifications. Consequently, social inequality and structural violence are deemed inveterate, ordinary, or even nonexistent because they are perceived to be the result of a lack of effort on the part of apathetic people who are thought not to have equipped themselves with the necessary skills required to thrive in a free market. In a sense, the projection of blame onto individual bodies and minority groups for the turmoil and trauma experienced by society may be neoliberalism’s most effective accomplishment in privatization to date. Put differently, if disaffiliating from the misery capitalism has caused, while accusing the poor and destitute of creating their own suffering, is not neoliberalism’s greatest feat, it certainly is its most manipulatively sadistic one.

In sum, discursive tactics that convince people injured by capitalism that their wounds are self-inflicted is a convenient disavowal under neoliberalism. This is because individualizing structural violence allows neoliberal discourse to claim innocence by belaboring the irrefutably vapid cliché “that’s just the way it is.” In the face of these neoliberalizing assaults on society, it then becomes vital to determine how to respond to the disciplinary mechanisms of neoliberalism. We therefore have to identify the sites and situations where the logic of neoliberalism is disseminated in order to sabotage the haunting discourse it has become.

“Death by a Thousand Cuts” - Neoliberalism in the University

The debilitating products of colonial, corporatized, and capitalist higher education have been written about at length (Autonomous Geographies Collective 2010; Dowling 2008; Marston and de Leeuw 2013; Ni Laoire and Shelton 2003; Peake 2009; Peters and Turner 2014; Rouhani 2012). Less attention, however, has been paid to the personal toll that the disciplinary technologies of neoliberalism take, including the emotional damages they inflict (Bondi 2005; Brown and Pickerill 2009; Browne 2005; Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda 2014; de Leeuw, Greenwood and Lindsay 2013; Lawson 2009). Recent research on higher education has shed

light on increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and unhappiness, as well as the feelings of despair, non-belonging, and hopelessness occurring in institutional settings (Gallagher 2012; Geise 2013; Horton and Tucker 2014). Even so, many Anglo-American universities are being neoliberalized at alarming rates (Bondi 2005; Clough and Blumberg 2012; Gibson Graham 1999; Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda 2014; Peake 2015). Based on these trends, we can conclude that neoliberal institutions of higher education are contributing to degradations in mental health and emotional stability, which is primarily due to the elevating levels of stress they are manufacturing for students, faculty, and workers alike.

In this context, the day-to-day “little things” and “small stuff” that take place within neoliberal universities matter greatly. Particularly, because they accumulate over the course of days/weeks/months/terms/years/careers. Everyday activities such as receiving and answering scores of daily emails, filling out numerous bureaucratic forms, writing-editing-revising grant applications, performing volunteer committee work, completing departmental progress reports, marking hundreds of papers, managing and coping with instances of contra-power, and meeting with students, other faculty members, as well as staff and administrators, in addition to standard required amounts of teaching and research – are exhausting and overwhelming. This managerialist piling-on has faculty members, (especially those who are contingent, sessional, part-time) isolated, over-extended, and severely mistreated (Bondi 2005; Davies and Bansel 2005; Dowling 2008; Meyerhoff, Johnson, and Braun 2011; Lawson 2009). These dynamics are occurring at the same time as staff members are having to juggle the fallout of austerity measures that are giving rise to erratic changes in fiscal record-keeping, as well as unpredictable shifts in budgets, protocols, and deadlines.

Such domino-effect processes of bureaucratization lead to intensified workloads that are then offloaded onto office coordinators, assistants, and clerks, who often have to deal with superiors in administration, as well as faculty members, that are at times guilty of engaging in condescending, negligent, dismissive, and patronizing behaviors and attitudes. This is not to mention the rampant and widespread exploitation, marginalization, and casualization faced by contracted, typically non-unionized, workers who are employed in the food service, maintenance, and custodial sectors of many universities. Consequently, capitalistic bottom-line-focused labor relations are transforming institutions of higher education into hostile sites of

hetero-masculinist oppression, neurotic sequestration, hierarchical posturing, and silent paranoia. Existence in the neoliberal university has thus become the proverbial “death by a thousands cuts.” All is not lost however, because despite the fact that the vast majority of universities are now awash in processes of neoliberalization, there does remain resistance to such debilitating tendencies, and it is probably no coincidence that is coming from anarchist, Indigenous, feminist, queer, autonomist, Marxist, anti-racist, critical disability, and radical scholars (Autonomous Geographies Collective 2010; Belina 2011; Engel-Di Mauro 2009; Hunt and Holmes 2015; Great Lakes Feminist Geography Collective 2015; Lawson 2009; Mahtani 2006; Marston and de Leeuw; Pusey and Sealy-Huggins 2013; Springer 2012a, 2013).

The Dignity of the Student

Perhaps the most disconcerting product of neoliberal higher education is the treatment of students, who face a demoralizing barrage of emotional slings and arrows as part of their educational experience. Learning has now come to mean performing well on high-stakes standardized tests, cramming for cumulative exams concentrated near the same calendar dates, and writing lengthy (typically colonial/white) “pleasing to their professor” scholarly papers, the sources for which are dependent upon access to corporate, pay-walled journals. The prospect of expanding one’s intellectual horizon functions with the general premise that students compete for high marks, scholarships, recognition, and awards of “excellence” in conjunction with paying substantial, ever-rising tuition fees to do so.

Notably, students are generally expected to manage these suppressive aspects of higher education on their own, all the while being offered petty statements of indifference framing their stressful and nerve-racking conditions as “something everybody has to deal with,” and “what you signed up for.” In many cases, students must learn to cope with these conditions while simultaneously holding a job(s), providing/seeking childcare, perhaps coping with a disability, and simply dealing with issues in their personal lives. These normalized, anxiety-inducing mistreatments are nothing less than covert processes of individualization that wreak havoc on the emotional stability and mental health of those who have to endure them. Students are forced to run through the gauntlet in order to simply gain an education—an education, distressingly, which is now being corrupted into nothing more than a credential allowing them to sell themselves on a market. Meanwhile, institutional bodies of the university that were created to support

marginalized students and staff are having their budgets slashed, their activities curtailed, workers dismissed, or are being shut down altogether (i.e. equity and inclusion offices, women's resource centers, positive/queer spaces, child care centers, etc.). Shamefully, it is not uncommon for university administrators, and sometimes even faculty, to deny the dignity of the student.

There does remain hope in light of the lashings capitalist education gives rise to, because despite the systemically destructive ways in which authority and the pressure to be (neoliberally) productive flow through the academy's hierarchies, those who are suffering in universities can find each other – and slow things down. Because encountering, relating to, taking care of each other, and saying “enough” together in oppressive circumstances, constitute acts of defiance in-and-of themselves (Goldman 2012 [1910]; Kropotkin 1992 [1885]; Sánchez Saornil 1935). More candidly, in the face of neoliberalism, mutual aid is resistance.

January 1, 1994: A Magnificent/Terrifying Introduction

The story of the Zapatistas is one of dignity, outrage, and struggle. It is an ongoing saga of collective resistance to over 500 years of attempted imperial conquest and accumulation by dispossession justified by the racist denigration of Indigenous people and the repression of rural peasants in their fight for land.¹¹ It is also nothing less than a revolutionary and poetic account of liberation, empathy, and revolt – a movement characterized as much by hardship, adversity, and tears, as it is by laughter, dancing, and hope. And for people of the Ch'ol, Tseltal, Tsotsil, Tojolabal, Mam, and Zoque communities who make the decision to become Zapatista, it is a story retold, reborn, and rekindled each new day, with each new step.¹²

The most well known aspect of the Zapatista struggle involves the uprising the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* [Zapatista Army of National Liberation]) led in Chiapas, Mexico on January 1, 1994. Appropriately enough, they introduced themselves in a magnificent/terrifying fashion – by taking up arms against the state on the day the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect. Their successful insurrection was the result of over a decade of clandestine organizing throughout the Lacandon Jungle and Chiapaneco Highlands. The origin of the EZLN dates back to November 17, 1983, when three *Mestizo* and three Indigenous urban revolutionaries arrived in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast to form a guerilla army (Conant 2010, Muñoz Ramírez 2008). Just over ten years later, in the early hours of the 1st of January 1994, thousands of masked Indigenous insurgents from the

EZLN stepped out of the mist and shadows to say *¡Ya Basta!* (“Enough”) to the repression and misery that colonialism and capitalism had thrust upon them.

The jolting manner in which they presented themselves to the Mexican Government, as well as the world, saw them descend upon several towns, cities, prisons, and upper-class landowners. In doing so the EZLN liberated political prisoners, overtook military barracks, seized government offices, and burnt administrative files that unfairly criminalized Indigenous people. In the rural countryside, Zapatista soldiers kicked wealthy property-owners off the plantation-like *encomiendas* they had expropriated from Indigenous *campesinos* (peasants) and reclaimed stolen land that was taken from their communities through historical and contemporary de-territorializing processes of privatization (Mexico Solidarity Network 2015).

The federal military responded with force by sending thousands of troops to Chiapas in order to try to suppress the Zapatistas. Hundreds died in the ensuing 12-day exchange of bullets, with a ceasefire commencing on January 12, 1994 (Muñoz Ramirez 2008). What followed thereafter was a series of peace negotiations that resulted in the San Andrés Accords of 1996 (Mexico Solidarity Network 2015). These agreements were made to ensure the Mexican state recognized Indigenous rights in the areas of land, autonomy, and respect. Despite signing the accords, the federal government betrayed the peace process by failing to implement the changes in the constitution, and also refusing, outright, to uphold the commitments they made in principle to the Zapatistas, as well as all of Mexico’s Indigenous people (Mexico Solidarity Network 2015, Muñoz Ramirez 2008).

Since the 1994 uprising, the Zapatistas have been the target of physical violence, political repression, and low-intensity, civilian-aimed, paramilitary aggression by the Mexican Government and its army. This counter-insurgency, which includes unremitting martial surveillance, has been sanctioned by all levels of the government (federal, state, municipal) and continues to attempt to fracture Indigenous communities in Chiapas by pitting them against one another. The divide-and-conquer tactics employed by the state primarily include offering co-optive government “assistance” packages (i.e. payments and amenities) to the rural poor in Chiapas (largely Indigenous peasant farmers) in the exchange for disavowing or sabotaging the Zapatista resistance. Remarkably, even when violence is lateral in form, the Zapatistas withhold retaliation, maintain their steady focus on peace, and refer to “*PRI’istas*”¹³ (those Indigenous

people who remain loyal to the government by accepting payments or even assailing the Zapatistas) as their Indigenous “brothers and sisters.” This stems from the Zapatistas’ recognition that the source of the belligerence is “*el mal gobierno*”¹⁴ (“the bad government”), and is not necessarily the other Indigenous community members who acquiesce to its coercions.

The Mexican Government’s bought-and-paid for interferences also take the form of attacks on Zapatista communities, schools, health clinics, and *milpas* (agro-ecological cornfields), as well as food, water, and energy sources. Zapatistas have also been directly assaulted, and murdered, by paramilitary as well. The Zapatistas’ response to the counter-insurgency has been to maintain their steadfast conviction against ever becoming dependent upon the state and its corporate overlords. Thus, the Zapatistas wholly refuse to accept any money/aid the government offers, and defiantly do so by referring to such buy-outs as *migajas* (“crumbs”) (Klein 2015). Their decision to never accept government assistance is crucial to their resistance. This is because, despite the fact that at one point in time they took up arms against the government, the most powerful weapon the Zapatistas now wield in the face of neoliberal violence is neither guns nor bullets, but rather, their word and autonomy (Marcos 2001; Muñoz Ramirez 2008).

The autonomy of the Zapatistas centers upon collective work, iterative reflection, and reciprocal offerings of dignity and respect. Consequently, as they are not preoccupied with the accumulation of profit, individual status, private property, or personal prestige, they are able to concentrate their energies and emotions on fortifying their communities. And “community” to a Zapatista, is a very precious thing. The Zapatistas move forward in their resistance by constructing social relations centered on collective work, mutual aid, equitable gender relations, democratic-voluntary-temporary governance, and horizontal popular assembly. These everyday revolutionary exercises are rooted in the 13 original demands the Zapatistas made upon the dawn of their rebellion which include: land, housing, work, food, health, education, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, liberty and peace. And as this is a chapter concerning neoliberalism’s corruption of the education systems we find ourselves in, I will now shift my focus upon to only one of the Zapatista demands by describing the principles they embrace in their approach to education.

Zapatismo: “A World Where Many Worlds Fit”

For the purposes of this piece, I conceptualize Zapatismo as the diverse, unique, and dynamic ensemble of relational practices, principles, and emotions the Zapatistas engender and share, which serve to recognize the dignity and interdependence of all.¹⁵ Alternatively, as a Zapatista education promoter shared with me, Zapatismo is the “intuition one feels in their chest to respect the greatness of others which reciprocally enlarges our hearts.” In addition to these sentiments surrounding Zapatismo, it is often described as being comprised of seven guiding principles:

1. *Obedecer y no Mandar* (To obey, not command)
2. *Proponer y no Imponer* (To propose, not impose)
3. *Representar y no Suplantar* (To represent, not supplant)
4. *Convencer y no Vencer* (To convince, not conquer)
5. *Construir y no Destruir* (To construct, not destroy)
6. *Servir y no Servirse* (To serve, not to serve oneself)
7. *Bajar y no Subir* (To go down, not to go up) or (To work from below, not seek to rise)

These convictions serve as the foundation that guides the everyday efforts of the Zapatistas in how they approach fortifying and protecting their communities, as well as constructing “A World Where Many Worlds Fit.” Zapatismo is thus the practice of community, the expression of collective work, and the acknowledgement of interconnectedness coupled with a constant process of self-reflexivity. What it gives rise to in substance are radical possibilities for galvanizing horizontal relationships that actively engage in validating care and the mutual recognition of dignity.

Importantly, the spirit of Zapatismo is constituted in the concepts of time, space, and relationality of Indigenous people, specifically, the historically enduring customs of the Maya. Zapatismo, in its regenerated and transformed state, is the convalescence of a millennia-old living Maya worldview rooted in communal praxis that has been recuperated and re-vitalized by the present-day Zapatistas. Thus, while the contemporary Zapatista Movement began on November 17, 1983, and subsequently presented itself to the world on January 1, 1994, the principles listed above are not new to the Zapatistas. And while the revolutionary prose and

poetics of the current Zapatistas mirror that of autonomous Marxists, anarcho-communists, libertarian socialists and, more recently, transnational feminists and queer theorists, thousands of years old Maya *cosmovisión* (worldview) and cultural practice comprise the heart of Zapatismo.

The EZLN's heavy Marxist leanings can be traced to the original six politicized urban intellectuals, who arrived in Chiapas in 1983 in order to build a revolutionary vanguard of armed guerillas (Conant 2010, Muñoz Ramírez 2008). What the university-educated socialists arriving in the early years of the EZLN did not expect (including the now infamous Subcomandante Marcos) was to be “conquered.” To put it bluntly, the rigid Marxist-Leninist doctrines they sought to impress upon the rural Indigenous peasants ended up faltering because the urban intellectual rebels were trying to *impose* ideas upon the communities, rather than step back and pay attention to the Indigenous voices within them (Conant 2010; Muñoz Ramirez 2008). They simply needed to listen in order to learn how to survive the remote jungle and highlands of Chiapas, as well as to gain an understanding of the “mythhistories,” worldviews, and rhythms of the Indigenous people they were encountering (Conant 2010; Speed 2005).

The result was a foundation and structure of Maya philosophies infused with Marxist analysis that were later injected with revolutionary perspectives surrounding the rights of women, and eventually united with queer discourses of inclusion.¹⁶ In addition to learning to listen, the armed guerillas also had to be taught by the Indigenous peasants what it meant to patiently organize “from below” (from the heart/roots), while also engaging in an iterative process of self-reflection, horizontal discussion, and reciprocal support. This quotidian process of moving forward while questioning now epitomizes the strength, resiliency, and enduring qualities of Zapatismo, and is reflected in the Zapatista dueling axiom of “*Preguntando Caminamos*” (“Asking, We Walk”), which is central to their struggle, as well as their process of education (Holloway 1996).

Zapatista Autonomous (Rebel) Education

I was able to learn several valuable, and transformative, lessons in what education “could be” upon spending time with the Zapatistas. What resonated most powerfully was the humble, hospitable, and heart-filled dispositions they engendered, while simultaneously embodying resolute outrage and unwavering courage in the face of violent incursions, both discursive and material, of colonial state power, neoliberalism, paramilitary aggression, and capitalist

infiltration. Radically politicized perspectives and steadfast liberatory convictions coupled with caring, modest, and other-centered demeanors define the Zapatista resistance. These aspects of their rebellion are reflected in the principles of Zapatismo, and are made manifest everyday in how they approach education. And because Zapatista education is an ongoing process of community-based praxis centering on the infamous cry for “*Tierra y Libertad*” (“Land and Freedom”) it means their pedagogy is place-based and geographically situated.

Zapatista education is also rooted in political struggle, the awareness of injustice, and striving towards social transformation. Paralleling concepts similar to those touched upon in Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the Zapatistas focus on how the socially dispossessed have been, and continue to be, targeted for subjugation and domination, as well as ways in which they can collectively work towards liberation when placed under the shadow of power. This entails shedding light on the violent contradictions, hypocrisies, and paradoxes that arise from capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal systems. For the Zapatistas, it also involves learning, organizing, and speaking “from below and the left” (a Zapatista phrase with multiple-meanings signifying “from the heart,” as well as working collectively, horizontally, and from a position of lower social status that does not seek prestige). The Zapatista approach can thereby be thought of as a form of popular emancipatory education, which recognizes that in a context of poverty and oppression that education is never politically neutral. The rebel autonomous schools they have constructed thus means they are embodying the spirit of revolt, systemically engaging in the practice of freedom, and that each lesson they teach is one more insubordinate step away from the state, as well as an outright rejection of capitalist logic and neoliberal discourse.

The topics of education taken into consideration when developing the curriculum for each Zapatista community are comprised of the core subjects of reading, writing, math, and science. In addition, there is a heavy focus on the revolutionary history of Mexico, each region’s respective Indigenous language(s)/customs, anti-consumerist perspectives regarding land and nature, gender equity through Zapatista “Women’s Revolutionary Law,” and the context of the Zapatista struggle. Because the Zapatistas often refer to capitalism as a destructive “Hydra” (one of their many definitions for it), their schools do not teach entrepreneurialism, individualism, or competition. Rather, Zapatista lessons see students engaging in collective work, mutual aid, critical thought, self-reflexivity, and planting food. Other key themes in Zapatista education

include anti-systemic community health/hygiene, arts and crafts, as well as singing, dancing, storytelling, and physical education/play.

At the school nearby where I resided, there were weekly lessons that took place via movie-watching (enthusiastically referred to as “*Cine Pirate*” [“Pirate Cinema”]), which involved an amiable and good-natured education promoter theatrically explaining the often unseen power relations, politics, and systems present in the film. This same education promoter later had numerous conversations with myself and others on the topics of subjectification, Maya philosophy, decolonization, Foucauldian discourse analysis, communal relationality, accumulation by dispossession, gender justice, polysemy/semiotics, anti-power, modernity’s view of time versus alternative perspectives on time, NGO’ization, critical geopolitics, radical pedagogy, and Freirean conscientization amongst many others. I mention this not to suggest these topics are representative of the entire Zapatista curriculum, but rather to highlight the ingenuity of the Zapatistas, as well as to provide a small glimpse of what type of teachers and content their elementary, middle school, and high school students spend time with.

On Being “Otherly” – Inclusion, Belonging, and Queering Discourse

The Zapatistas also foreground inclusion in their education system. During my time as a student I was a part of numerous discussions surrounding race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, difference, and “othering,” some specifically relating to queer struggle. While in the *caracol* of Oventic, I heard the phrase that Zapatista territory was “a home to all who struggle.” Relative to the politics of belonging and then, the Zapatistas are on the leading-edge of anti-oppressionist practice. This is perhaps most noticeable in the efforts they have made to queer their discourse, solidarity, and praxis. And while it was noted that gender variant, queer, and transgender people were uncommon amongst the rural communities, it was also stressed that queerness was to be neither scolded nor persecuted. This commitment with queer inclusion is also reflected when looking at the Zapatistas explicit use of the word “*compañeroas*,” (sometimes seen as *compañer@s*) a hybridized version of the commonly used Spanish words *compañeros* (masculine) and *compañeras* (feminine), loosely translating to “friend-comrade-companion.”

Akin to this, there are several international Zapatista comunicués addressing the issue of queerness through references to “*otras amores*” (“other loves,” acknowledging gay, lesbian, polysexual, asexual people), as well as a reclamation of the word “other.” As the Zapatistas

understand all too well how being socially “othered” leads to repression, exclusion, and violence against marginalized groups, they subversively have taken up the word “other,” transformed it into the adjective “otherly,” and have begun using it as a playful compliment. Thus, the prospect of being the “other” (*otroa* or *otr@*) is now a signifier of endearing respect in the discourse of Zapatismo. This recovery of the word “other” stems in part from the recognition that queer and transgender people have been “othered,” that the Zapatistas themselves have been “othered,” and as a result they have the same shared experience of being very “otherly.”

These whimsical shifts in language have made the topic of “difference” visible in Zapatista communities, but they have not done so in a way that positions difference as abject, derogatory, or something to be ashamed of. In this way, Zapatismo, when shared in the political terrain of education, and more precisely in the classroom, destabilizes oppressive binaries in regard to the discourse of gender and sexuality. It also inhibits heteronormativity by stifling the shame-inducing rhetoric and acts of intolerance that “difference” and “others” are often subjected to. Consequently, the queering of discourse the Zapatistas practice brings forth more recognition, regard, and respect for non-conformity, while also unsettling rigid dualisms and reductionist categories at the same time.

Zapatismo, Place, and Decolonial Praxis

Place is fundamental to the Zapatistas. That is, the Zapatista method of education emerges from the unique yet interconnected relational assemblages, shared histories, and environmental systems (i.e. *places*) that exist amongst the rebel territories. This is evident in the localized, grassroots, “from below” focus they take in their approach to teaching and learning. Local knowledge is so central amongst their communities that many of the *promotores de educación* (“education promoters”) in each school often come from the same *places* as their students. The Zapatistas refer to teachers as “education promoters” in order to soften the rigid boundaries between “those who know, and those who do not know.” This discursive practice also allows them to decenter authority, contravene perceived hierarchies of expertise, and unsettle any false claims to individual knowledge-creation that could potentially fragment their horizontal system of education. It is also a step towards subverting the toxic relationships that arise from regimes of credentialization and liberal award cultures. That is, there are no distinctions or ranks amongst teachers – everyone is simply, and humbly, an “education

promoter.” If transferred into university settings, this would be the equivalent of abolishing administrators outright, as well as eliminating vertically-professionalized designations (e.g. distinguished, full, senior, associate, assistant, adjunct, sessional, etc.) and careerist titles (e.g. dean, chancellor, president, reader, professor, lecturer, instructor, leader, etc.) in favor of recognizing everyone as an “education promoter.”

This dedication to non-hierarchical practice highlights how the Zapatistas are not tethered to the disciplinary mechanisms of impact assessments, global rankings, publication lists, state-arbitrated grant monies, CVs, and email signatures, but rather, are focused on curiosity and learning. Such a prospect is made possible through autonomy, which emerges from resisting colonial governance, capitalist social relations, neoliberal discourse, and individualism. Relatedly, each Zapatista school develops its own schedule of lessons through popular assembly comprised of horizontal, democratic decision-making that address the needs, concerns, and desires of the respective communities. This process takes into consideration the ecologies of the local environments in which they are living, and after going through a process of communal discussion, they develop a curriculum accordingly.

Zapatista students are also educated outside the physical space of the classroom, particularly so they can learn how to plant and harvest food through the use of organic, sustainable, and non-genetically engineered, agro-ecological farming techniques. This area of education stresses the importance, and necessary applied skills, to maintain efforts in achieving food sovereignty for future generations. It also provides an incisive overview of how transgenic modifications and privatizations of seeds/plants are deemed to be overt threats and blatant attacks upon the Zapatistas and their culture, as they are the “People of the Corn,” a reality passed down from their Indigenous origin stories (Ross 2006). As their education system is unimpeded upon by the state, and because it is rooted in defending, protecting, and preserving their local Indigenous traditions, customs, and identities (as well as quite literally learning about their ancestral lands), the Zapatistas effectively habituate decolonial praxis in every aspect of their teaching and learning.

Further bringing to life decolonial theories that aggravate rigid divisions typically found within capitalist education, the Zapatista schools do not employ hierarchical scales of evaluation. This means there are no strict divisions amongst those who “know more” and those who “know

less,” and that as students go through the learning process they are not punished for getting things “wrong.” In addition, children of different ages learn the same subjects together, in the same classrooms, and are taught how to teach each other while doing so. Similarly, there are no final marks distributed that signify a terminal end to the learning process, and there are no grades used to compare students to each other. In these ways, the Zapatistas highlight how learning is neither a competition, nor something to be “completed.” Consequently, by steadfastly refusing to relinquish their Indigeneity, as well as weaving their ancestral worldviews and Woman’s Revolutionary Law into their day-to-day teaching, the Zapatistas have decolonized their education system by eliminating shame from the process of learning.

Given these aspects of the Zapatista approach, it is evident that learning under the principles of Zapatismo becomes a decolonial, anti-patriarchial, and situated learning experience that it is intimately tied to the *places* (i.e. land, ecological settings, socio-spatial relationships, oral histories, kinships, customs) the Indigenous communities find themselves in. Their education system is thus a product of Indigenous self-determination, and the advancements they have made in their ongoing rebellion and disciplined organizing against a neocolonial state. Accordingly, their dedication to collective resistance, as well as mutuality, has enabled them to autonomously create a revolutionary process of learning comprised of the continual practice of critical thought, community introspection, and reciprocity. It is also deeply rooted in local physical environments and inclusive of traditional Indigenous worldviews, languages, and stories. Thus, what Zapatismo has been to others, including myself, is an invigorating and inspirational “possibility” in regard to what exists in the way of decolonial methods, place-based education, and fostering critical consciousness.

Zapatismo as Pedagogy: Instilling A Capacity for Discernment

The Zapatistas have noted that state-sanctioned schools and government-legitimated universities have the tendency to become “corrals of thought domestication” (Marcos 1998). This is due to the increasing emphasis corporatized higher learning is placing upon transforming students and faculty into citizen-consumers and ambitious entrepreneurs. Put differently, the tenets that capitalist education is pushing on students and faculty is that their creative abilities must be reigned-in, packaged, and advertised as economically productive skills that can yield

profits for respective buyers. In doing so, people in neoliberal universities are suffering, whilst simultaneously being individualized into oblivion.

The Zapatistas have responded to these debilitating abuses of capitalist education by revolting against them. In successfully doing so, they have attained autonomy and now exercise it unreservedly in their grassroots system of rebel learning. Since liberating themselves from state power, the education they promote has taken a decolonial, anti-patriarchal, radically inclusive, participatory, and cooperative form. Their “curriculum” covers a host of revolutionary topics and geographically situated applications. And despite the depth, breadth, and expanse of what the Zapatistas are imparting within their communities, the goal of their process of education can be summed up as trying to instill one thing – a capacity for discernment.

Providing the opportunity for students and teachers to participate in discernment through a relational and communal sense of work, organization, and support is what education is comprised of under Zapatismo. With that being said, there is of course no model or manual for Zapatismo. It is not a doctrine to be bought or sold. Rather, the practice of Zapatismo as pedagogy means planting seeds of resistance and harvesting the hope that emerges by allowing democracy and justice to surface organically, without imposition, and encouraging imagination and participation amongst all members of a community, without ridicule. One of the education promoters I spoke with noted the Zapatista definition of “community” was “an ensemble of diversity.” She also stressed the importance they placed on being able to identify how neoliberal actions and thoughts debilitate communities in order to prevent it. She then discussed how the recognition of a collective subject, as well as engaging in discernment, were ways in which communities asserted their vitality and rejuvenated themselves. She concluded by stating that Zapatismo is “a bridge that makes things possible.” From this standpoint, when reflecting upon what many of us experience in neoliberal universities, Zapatismo offers us possibilities – possibilities for resistance, insurrection, and insurgency, as well as for creativity, mutual care, and a resuscitation of our own “ensembles of diversity.”

Applying the principles of Zapatismo to pedagogy suggests that differences of identity/ability, cultural exclusions, and social hierarchies be explicitly addressed and dealt with in order to achieve widespread social transformation. Zapatismo as an approach to education thereby frames classrooms (“in whatever form they may take”) as “spaces of encounter” where

“that which is repressive, is not tolerated.”¹⁷ Put another way, when informed by Zapatismo, the settings where teaching and learning occur become meeting places (figuratively and literally) where people can experience, get to know, and listen to “others.” In this way, practicing Zapatismo entails acknowledging “difference” and power, and making concerted efforts to defy the exclusions and non-belongings that arise as a result of contrasting social axes of identification (race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, nationality, belief system, citizenship, etc.). Committing to Zapatismo also involves challenging, contesting, and undermining the oppressive, peripheralizing, and subordinating tendencies surrounding socio-spatially constructed notions of difference, and becoming disobedient in those instances when we are required to be complicit with them. To put it bluntly, Zapatismo is capitalist education’s antagonist. It withstands the torment and despair brought forth by neoliberal discourse and ego-centric individualism, and in doing so, allows both love and rage to flourish.

A Conclusion: For Resistance and Hope ...at a Snail’s Pace

Neoliberalism has hijacked education and is holding it hostage. It demands ransom in the form of tuition payments and deference from students, as well as obedience from its faculty and workers. Consequently, a collective struggle against neoliberal universities is exigent. And a unified front is particularly vital in the given moment considering that they are neoliberalizing students and faculty into conditions of acute anxiety, recurrent depression, financial duress, and pathological individualism. A struggle in the arena of higher education is also urgent because life in neoliberal universities is replete with rote performance, punitive processes of atomization, and institutionalized evaluations that ascribe rank to people on account of contrived notions of merit. More directly, neoliberal universities need to be set on fire, walked out of, and toppled because they are punishing the curiosity, creativity, imagination, and humanity out of us.

In order to subvert the fragmenting, responsabilized, and injuring processes of individual isolation occurring within higher education, we must be able to leverage the hurt, pain, and outrage people are feeling in ways that collectively confront administrative decrees attempting to domesticate students, as well as ourselves. We can unsettle the repressive norms of neoliberal universities by reshaping our discourses, habits, and behaviors into actions that are more inclusive, anti-racist, feminist, queer, non-hierarchical/anarchist, and fair. The practice of relationality, affirming emotional work, and queering professionalized hetero-masculinist spaces

are also essential in throwing a proverbial wrench in the gears of any neocolonial institution that coerces people to become self-centered, auto-correcting entrepreneurialist students and scholars. More directly, we should be promoting education, rather than policing it. Vanquishing the disciplinary technologies of neoliberalism thereby means being creative, curious, and humble, particularly with students, by refusing to internally make the hierarchy-inducing statement: “I know, and they do not know” – because there is nothing revolutionary about arrogance.

To genuinely follow through on these things, we need to slow down, spend time with each other (as well as students), and take account of each other’s emotions and everyday struggles. Since their genesis, the Zapatistas have used the image of the *caracol* (snail/snailshell) to signify the tempo of their rebellion, decision-making, and even education system. That is, the Zapatistas do not consent to “colonial, state, or capitalist time,” rather, they move forward deliberately and purposefully by defining time on their own (ancestral Maya) terms. This stems from their realization that in order to endure, as well as to maintain the health of each person and community, their rhythms and processes need to progress in a gradual, measured, and slow fashion, or, as one *promotor* noted: “...at a snail’s pace.”

The Zapatistas also follow a principle of *Mandar Obedeciendo* (“To Lead by Obeying”), which if practiced means jettisoning one’s ego and individual ambition to put others, as well as the collective whole, first. From this orientation, we have a chance to share the process of knowledge creation, rather than an obligation to claim individual ownership of it. Incorporating Zapatismo entails a devotion to a pedagogy that engages in a constant and continual process of self-reflexivity and relational care. And if we are to confront the incursions of neoliberal discourse in the classrooms, workplaces, offices, and hallways in which we find ourselves, it will be essential to offer support, compassion, and empathy to one another, as well as respond en masse when power is being abused, or others are being forgotten. Employing the practice of Zapatismo thereby means putting forth emotional labor to prevent the loneliness that neoliberalism gives rise to by acknowledging the inherent dignity of others.

In sum, Zapatismo yearns for mutuality, liberation, and autonomy. Embracing it allows us to be convivial with one another and indignant with administrations and authority. It provides us the opportunity to rebuke individualism, abandon capitalist social relations, and work together to transform the status quo through imaginative, inclusive discourses, as well as through socially

just acts of acknowledgement and belonging. It encourages us to envision alternatives and to move forward with creativity and conviction to achieve those alternatives. More simply, Zapatismo nourishes hope. But not hope in an abstract sense of the word, but the type of hope that when sown through everyday acts of recognition and mutual care, and nourished by collective resistance and shared rage, is embodied and lived. It gives rise to the kind of hope that tends to wounds, comforts affliction, wakes up history, and enlarges hearts. The kind of hope that causes chests to swell, jaws to clench, and arms to lock when others are being belittled, humiliated, or hurt, regardless of whether it be by individual, institution, system, structure, apparatus, or discourse. In short, Zapatismo suggests the anguish of neoliberalism can be overcome, because truth be told, neoliberalism is not an ominous, universalizing, panoptic master – it is simply a reality. And realities can be changed. ...just ask a Zapatista.

References

- Autonomous Geographies Collective. 2010. Beyond scholar activism: Making strategic interventions inside and outside the neoliberal university. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 9(2): 245-75.
- Barnett, C. 2005. The consolations of “neoliberalism”. *Geoforum* 36: 7-12.
- Belina, B. 2011. Ending public space as we know it. *Social Justice* 38: 13-27.
- Berg, L. D. 2012. Geographies of identity I Geography–(neo)liberalism–white supremacy. *Progress in Human Geography* 36(4): 508-17.
- Bondi, L. 2005. Working the Spaces of Neoliberal Subjectivity: Psychotherapeutic Technologies, Professionalisation and Counselling. *Antipode* 37(3): 497-514.
- Brenner, N., and Theodore, N. 2002. Cities and the geographies of “actually existing neoliberalism.” *Antipode* 34: 349-79.
- Brenner, N., Peck, J., and Theodore, N. 2010. Variegated neoliberalization: geographies, modalities, pathways. *Global Networks* 10: 182-222.
- Brown, G., and Pickerill, J. 2009. Spaces for emotion in the spaces of activism. *Emotion, Space and Society* 2: 24-35.
- Brown, W. 2003. Neo-liberalism and the end of liberal democracy. *Theory & Event* 7: n.p.

- Browne, K. 2005. Placing the personal in pedagogy: engaged pedagogy in “feminist” geographical teaching. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 29(3): 339-54.
- Castree, N. 2006. From neoliberalism to neoliberalisation: consolations, confusions, and necessary illusions. *Environment and Planning A* 38: 1-6.
- Clough, N., and Blumberg, R. 2012. Toward anarchist and autonomist Marxist geographies. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 11: 235-51.
- Conant, J. 2010. *A poetics of resistance: The revolutionary public relations of the Zapatista Insurgency*. AK Press.
- Davies, B., and Bansel, P. 2005. The time of their lives? Academic workers in neoliberal time(s). *Health Sociology Review* 14(1): 47-58.
- DeJacque, J. 1859. *L'Humanisphère, Utopie Anarchique*. In: J. Hartman and M. Lause. 2012. *In the Sphere of Humanity: Joseph Déjacque, Slavery, and the Struggle for Freedom An English Translation and Annotation of Selected Writings of Joseph Déjacque*. [Translated by J. Hartman and M. Lause.] University of Cincinnati Libraries.
- de Leeuw, S., Greenwood, M., and Lindsay, N. 2013. Troubling good intentions. *Settler Colonial Studies* 3(3-4): 381-94.
- Dowling, R. 2008. Geographies of identity: laboring in the “neoliberal” university. *Progress in Human Geography* 32: 812-20.
- Engel-Di Mauro, S. 2009. Natural Science Pedagogy and Anarchist Communism: Developing a radical curriculum for physical geography in the US. *Human Geography* 2(1): 106-22.
- England, K., and Ward, K. 2007. Conclusion: Reflections on neoliberalization. In *Neoliberalization: States, networks, peoples*. Edited by K. England and K. Ward, 248-62. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- EZLN-CCRI. 2005. *Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (Sexta Declaración de la Selva Lacandona)*.
- Foucault, M. 2010. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France (1978 1979)*. Edited by M. Senellart. [Translated by G. Burchell]. 1st Picador Paperback Edition New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Flores Magón, R. 1910. La repercussion de un linchamiento. *Regeneración* 12.
- Freire, P. 2014. *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

- Gallagher, R. 2012. *National Survey of College Counseling 2012. Monograph Series Number 9.* The International Association of Counseling Services, Inc.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. 1996. *"The" End of Capitalism (as We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy; with a New Introduction.* University of Minnesota Press.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. 1999. Queer(y)ing capitalism in and out of the classroom. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 23(1): 80–85.
- Geise, Rachel. 2013. The New Normal. *The Walrus* 10(3). <http://thewalrus.ca/the-new-normal/>.
- Goldman, E. 2012. [1910]. *Anarchism and other essays.* Courier Corporation.
- Gough, J. 2004. Changing scale as changing class relations: variety and contradiction in the politics of scale. *Political Geography* 23(2): 185-211.
- Great Lakes Feminist Geography Collective. 2015. For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 14(2): [Preprint].
- Hawkins, R., Manzi, M., and Ojeda, D. 2014. Lives in the making: Power, academia and the everyday. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 13(2): 328-51.
- Heynen, N., and Robbins, P. 2005. The neoliberalization of nature: Governance, privatization, enclosure and valuation. *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 16: 5-8.
- Holloway, J. 1996. The Concept of Power and the Zapatistas *Common Sense*. 19.
- Holloway, J. 2002. Zapatismo and the social sciences. *Capital & Class* 26(3): 153-60.
- Horton, J., and Tucker, F. 2014. Disabilities in academic workplaces: experiences of human and physical geographers. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39(1): 76-89.
- Hunt, S., and Holmes, C. 2015. Everyday Decolonization: Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics. *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 19(2): 154-72.
- Klein, H. 2015. *Compañeras: Zapatista Women's Stories.* Seven Stories Press.
- Kropotkin, P. 1992. [1885]. *Words of a Rebel.* Montreal: Black Rose.
- Larner, W. 2003. Neoliberalism?. *Environment and Planning D* 21(5): 509-12.
- Lawson, V. 2009. Instead of radical geography, how about caring geography? *Antipode* 41(1): 210-13.

- Mahtani, M. 2006. Challenging the Ivory Tower: Proposing Anti-Racist Geographies in the Academy. *Gender, Place and Culture* 13(1): 21-25.
- Marcos, S. 2014. *Between Light and Shadow*. Communiqué delivered in *La Realidad*, Chiapas Mexico [personal attendance].
- Marcos, S. 2001. *Our Word is Our Weapon: Selected Writings*. Seven Stories Press.
- Marcos, S. 1998. Interview from film: *Zapatista*. Big Noise Films, Santa Barbara.
- Marston, S. A., and de Leeuw, S. 2013. Creativity and Geography: Toward A Politicized Intervention. *Geographical Review* 103(2): iii-xxvi.
- McCarthy, J., and Prudham, S. 2004. Neoliberal nature and the nature of neoliberalism. *Geoforum* 35: 275-83.
- Mexico Solidarity Network. 2015. *Zapatismo*. Available at: <http://www.mexicosolidarity.org/programs/alternativeeconomy/zapatismo/en>
- Meyerhoff, E., Johnson, E., and Braun, B. 2011. Time and the university. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 10(3): 483-507.
- Muñoz Ramírez, G. 2008. *The Fire and The Word: A History of the Zapatista Movement*. San Francisco: City Lights.
- Ní Laoire, C., and Shelton, N. J. 2003. "Contracted out": Some implications of the casualization of academic labor in geography. *Area* 35: 92-100.
- Peake, L. 2009. Gender, race and sexuality. In: *The Handbook of Social Geography*. Edited by: S. Smith, R. Pain, S. Marston, and J.P. Jones III, 129-95. London: Sage.
- Peake, L.J. 2015. The Suzanne Mackenzie Memorial Lecture: Rethinking the politics of feminist knowledge production in Anglo-American geography. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien*.
- Peck, J. 2010. *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*. Oxford University Press.
- Peters, K., and Turner, J. 2014. Fixed-term and temporary: teaching fellows, tactics, and the negotiation of contingent labor in the UK higher education system. *Environment and Planning A* 46(10): 2317-31.
- Pusey, A., and Sealey-Huggins, L. 2013. Transforming the university: Beyond students and cuts. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 12(3): 443-458.

- Ross, J. 2006. *¡Zapatistas!: Making another world possible: chronicles of resistance, 2000-2006*. Nation Books.
- Rouhani, F. 2012. Practice what you teach: Facilitating anarchism in and out of the classroom. *Antipode* 44(5): 1726-41.
- Sánchez Saornil, L. 1935. La cuestión femenina en nuestros medios. *Solidaridad Obrera*.
- Sparke, M. 2006. Political geography: Political geographies of globalization (2) – governance. *Progress in Human Geography* 30: 1-16.
- Sparke, M. 2012. *Introducing globalization: Ties, tensions, and uneven integration*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Speed, S. 2005. Dangerous Discourses. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 28(1): 29-51.
- Springer, S. 2008. The nonillusory effects of neoliberalisation: linking geographies of poverty, inequality, and violence. *Geoforum* 39: 1520-25.
- Springer, S. 2010. Neoliberalism and geography: Expansions, variegations, formations. *Geography Compass* 4: 1025-38.
- Springer, S. 2012a. Anarchism! What geography still ought to be *Antipode*. 44(5): 1605-24.
- Springer, S. 2012b. Neoliberalism as discourse: between Foucauldian political economy and Marxian poststructuralism. *Critical Discourse Studies* 9(2): 133-147.
- Springer, S. 2014. Human geography without hierarchy. *Progress in Human Geography* 38: 402-19.
- Willis, K., Smith, A., and Stenning, A. (2008). Introduction: Social justice and neoliberalism. In *Social Justice and Neoliberalism: Global Perspectives*, edited by A. Smith, A. Stenning, and K. Willis, 1-15. London: Zed Books.

¹ The “Academy” (i.e. academics) has a long and exploitative record of analyzing Indigenous people; their cultural practices, histories, languages, and the social circumstances they face across varying colonial geographies. Such scholarly endeavours are dangerous because they can further open-up already targeted groups of Indigenous people to more acute forms of exposure, tokenism, fetishization, and cultural appropriation. In many cases, research of this nature is carried out despite that it comes from the best of intentions (de Leeuw, Greenwood, Lindsay 2013). What results, much too regularly, are erasures, mutings, and distortions of Indigenous voices, epistemologies, and worldviews. It is with these complexities in mind that I point out that probing the Zapatistas as an academic case study or ethnography would be committing a discursive act of violence against them. Thus, this chapter is written not with the purpose of ‘exposing’ the Zapatistas, but to share Zapatismo as something that may be embraced within and across our own local geographies, communities, and universities.

³ A *caracol* (“snailshell”) is a community center that serves as a metaphorical “door” allowing people to go into/out of Zapatista communities. The Zapatistas have five caracoles spread throughout Chiapas and the spiraling snailshell is symbolic and represents the circular, non-hierarchical rhythm of life for the Zapatistas, the protection of their communities, as well as ‘slowness’ (because their rebellion moves very gradually, but purposefully).

⁴ I was a student at the *Centro de Español y Lenguas Mayas Rebelde Autónomo Zapatista* (Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Spanish and Maya Languages Center - CELMRAZ), as well as an attendee of *La Escuelita de la Libertad según l@s Zapatistas* (The Little School of Freedom According to the Zapatistas).

⁵ “Galeano” (a Zapatista teacher) was murdered, brutally, on May 2, 2014 at the hands of nearly 20 paramilitaries who were acting on behalf of the state’s counterinsurgency against the Zapatistas.

⁶ Subcomandante Marcos, the enigmatic spokesperson of the Zapatistas as many know him, was metaphorically put to rest on May 25, 2014. He was later “reborn” in the form of a collective as “Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano,” taking the name so the fallen teacher (Galeano) would live on.

⁷ A giant red heart, adorned with a bandolier, surrounded by orange flames set on a yellow background with the caption: “*Ser una mujer... Es ser un revolucionaria*” (“To be a woman... Is to be a Revolutionary”). I also painted a red star on a black ground with the phrase: “*Ad Astra Per Aspera*” (“To the stars through difficulty”) partially because I am from Kansas, but more-so because the motto reminds me of the Zapatistas.

⁸ I hope none of you ever get typhoid.

⁹ Supporters of the Zapatistas are often referred to as “Adherents of the Sixth.” This moniker references the Zapatistas’ “Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle,” a proclamation detailing their rebellion and vision, as well as an overview of the respect, solidarity, and mutual support they offer towards people and collectives all over the world who are struggling “against neoliberalism, for humanity.”

¹⁰ It is essential I point out that it is not a model, a doctrine, or a blueprint to follow. The Zapatistas move forward in their resistance by “proposing, not imposing,” and in doing so would never suggest their “way” be forced upon others. They do not push Zapatismo as an ideology or an answer, and are ever careful and cautiously aware of the abuse of power that ensues when groups, organizations, or collectives assert their philosophies as dogma. As one Zapatista education promoter expressly stated, the Zapatistas “are not here to ‘zapaticize,’ or command, because once that starts to happen – we are dead.” I feel similarly about this chapter, thus my intent is neither to “zapaticize,” nor categorize, classify, confine, quarantine, or analyze the Zapatistas. Rather, I am simply sharing Zapatismo in hopes that it may spark some of us (as the Zapatistas say) “to be Zapatistas wherever you are.”

¹¹ *The Crack In The Wall; First Note On Zapatista Method* (Inaugural address at the seminar: “Critical Thought Versus the Capitalist Hydra” May 3-9, 2015)

¹² The EZLN, the Zapatista Uprising, and the ongoing Zapatista Insurgency have been written about at length (Muñoz Ramirez 2008, Klein 2015). As my aim in this chapter is to focus on Zapatismo and neoliberal higher education, I am only offering a very brief overview of the rich history of the EZLN, the Zapatistas, and their over 500 years of resistance. A more thorough reading of the Zapatistas is certainly in order.

¹³ These are the primary Indigenous people(s) that constitute the Zapatista communities in Chiapas. The Ch’ol, Tseltal, Tsotsil, Tojolobal, and Mam people are Maya, with the Zoque being a separate Indigenous group.

¹⁴ PRI stands for *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party), one of the major ruling parties in Mexico. Throughout the country, those who support the party are often referred to as “PRI’istas.”

¹⁵ The Zapatistas refer to the Mexican Government as “*el mal gobierno*,” meaning “the bad/evil government” - for obvious reasons.

¹⁶ Importantly, I do not speak for the Zapatistas, nor do I speak on behalf of the Zapatistas. I am simply speaking about some of the experiences I had with the Zapatistas, while sharing some time, and geography, with them. Accordingly, any mistakes, misrepresentations, or errors are my own.

¹⁷ Over the course of the Zapatista Insurgency, the discourse of the Zapatistas has increasingly become more progressive, particularly in regard to women’s rights, Indigenous feminisms, gender nonconformity, as well as queer and transgender inclusion.

¹⁸ Personal communication with a Zapatista education promoter, April 10, 2014.